

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----120793 241741Z /47

O 241632Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 814
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 1097

EXDIS (TREAT AS NODIS)

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMB LEWIS; WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI;
JERUSALEM FOR USDEL ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV MILI IS EG US XF
SUBJ: WEIZMAN'S VIEWS ON NEXT STEPS IN PEACE PROCESS

REF.: CAIRO 2457

1. ROY ATHERTON AND I MET FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF LATE MONDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 23, WITH DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN AT HIS OFFICE IN THE KNESSET IN JERUSALEM. HIS MILITARY SECRETARY, COLONEL TEHILA, WAS ALSO PRESENT. WEIZMAN HAD JUST LEFT THE KNESSET DEBATE AT THE CONCLUSION OF BEGIN'S LONG INTRODUCTORY SPEECH AND WAS IN A VERY WORRIED MOOD. WE HAD AN EXCEEDINGLY FRANK TALK ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION, HIS SCARCELY DISGUISED APPREHENSIONS ABOUT HIS OWN PRIME MINISTER'S RHETORIC AND TACTICS, HIS UNEASINESS ABOUT SADAT'S TRANSPARENT EFFORTS TO PLAY HIM OFF AGAINST BEGIN AS A MORE SYMPATHETIC INTERLOCUTOR, AND HIS IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO GET THE PEACE PROCESS MOVING AGAIN.

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2. WEIZMAN MADE VERY CLEAR THAT HE CANNOT PERSONALLY AFFORD TO RETURN TO CAIRO WITHOUT A CABINET DECISION HERE TO RENEW FORMAL PARTICIPATION IN THE MILITARY COMMITTEE. I CONVEYED SAYED MAREI'S MESSAGE AS CONTAINED IN REFTEL. WEIZMAN APPRECIATED THE MESSAGE, BUT SAID IT IS NOW THE FIFTH SUCH PERSONAL MESSAGE HE HAS RECEIVED FROM

GAMASY, MUBARAK, AND SAYED MAREI ALONG THE SAME LINES, EACH OF WHICH HE HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO REPORT TO BEGIN. BEGIN IS BOTH SUSPICIOUS AND HURT THAT WEIZMAN IS RECEIVING THESE OVERTURES WHILE HIS OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH SADAT SEEMS STEADILY TO BE DETERIORATING THROUGH THE EXCHANGES OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS. AT THE END OF THE LONG CONVERSATION, WEIZMAN SAID HE BELIEVED THE MOST USEFUL SINGLE THING WHICH COULD OCCUR TO UNFREEZE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ICE FLOES WOULD BE FOR SADAT TO SEND BEGIN SOME KIND OF PRIVATE MESSAGE DEMONSTRATING THAT THEIR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP HAS NOT BEEN IRREVOCABLY UNDERMINED. (ATHERTON ACKNOWLEDGED THE POINT, BUT SAID DELICATELY THAT HE DOUBTED WHETHER SADAT WOULD BE SO INCLINED, SINCE FROM SADAT'S PERSPECTIVE IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY BEGIN WHO SHOULD MAKE SUCH A MOVE FIRST.)

3. WEIZMAN DESCRIBED THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE CABINET AND ESPECIALLY AROUND THE PRIME MINISTER AS WORRISOME -- COMPOUNDED OF HURT PRIDE, DEFIANCE, SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS, A COMPULSION TO RESPOND IN KIND TO RHETORICAL WOUNDS, AND A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF ARAB PSYCHOLOGY. WEIZMAN RECOUNTED A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS IN HIS OWN SEVERAL TRIPS TO EGYPT AS CONVINCING HIM THAT HE UNDERSTOOD AT LEAST PARTLY WHAT MAKES SADAT AND HIS COLLEAGUES TICK. BUT, HE SAID, I AM PRACTICALLY THE ONLY ONE WHO DOES. HE SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD CONSCIOUSLY
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TRIED TO KEEP HIS SPEECH BEFORE THE KNESSET NON-PROVOCATIVE, BUT THAT HE COULD NOT RESIST REVEALING THE DEPTH TO WHICH HE HAD BEEN STUNG BY THE CAIRO PRESS AND BY WHAT HE CONCEIVES TO HAVE BEEN CHANGES OF POSITION BY SADAT SINCE THEIR FIRST MEETING IN JERUSALEM. WEIZMAN SAID HE HOPED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE NOW THAT BEGIN HAD GOTTEN THIS OFF HIS CHEST TO COOL THINGS OFF FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN FOR HIM TO RETURN TO CAIRO TO THE MILITARY COMMITTEE. FOR THIS REASON, HE HAD ALL BUT DECIDED TO POSTPONE HIS TRIP TO WASHINGTON IN ORDER TO BE READILY AVAILABLE TO RETURN TO CAIRO AS SOON AS THE CABINET GAVE HIM THE GREEN LIGHT (SEPTELS). HE ACKNOWLEDGED READILY THAT ANOTHER OF HIS MOTIVES IN DECIDING NOT TO LEAVE FOR WASHINGTON THIS WEEK WAS HIS SENSE THAT HIS INFLUENCE AND VOICE WERE VERY MUCH NEEDED IN THE CABINET AT THIS TIME TO TRY TO KEEP THINGS ON A MORE EVEN KEEL.

4. WEIZMAN REVIEWED AT LENGTH HIS EXPERIENCES WITH THE EGYPTIANS, AT JERUSALEM, AT GIANACLIS, AT ISMAILIA, AND WITH SADAT AT ASWAN. HE REMINDED ME THAT ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN EUPHORIC LIKE EVERYONE ELSE AFTER THE JERUSALEM

MEETINGS, HE HAD COME BACK FROM HIS FIRST TRIP TO EGYPT
A MUCH SOBERED MAN. HE SAID HE HAD REPORTED TO BEGIN
AND THE CABINET THEN (AS HE DID ALSO TO ME) THAT SADAT
WAS TOTALLY UNWILLING TO CONSIDER ALLOWING THE ISRAELI
SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI TO REMAIN, AND THAT HE HAD ALSO
BRIEFED THE CABINET ON GAMASY'S SURPRISINGLY UNSATISFACTORY
PROPOSALS FOR DEMILITARIZED ZONES NEAR THE OLD INTER-
NATIONAL BORDER. WHEN I ASKED HIM WHY, THEN, HAD BEGIN
SUBSEQUENTLY SEEMED SO SURPRISED AT SADAT'S ADAMANCY
ON THE SETTLEMENTS, HE SAID DISCOURAGEDLY "BECAUSE WE
HAVE BEEN PLAYING CHESS WITH OURSELVES." (IT WAS CLEAR
FROM THIS COMMENT AND OTHERS THROUGHOUT THE CONVER-
SATION THAT WEIZMAN BELIEVES HE HAS BEEN REALISTIC IN
HIS APPRECIATION OF THE EGYPTIAN POSITION AND HAS THOROUGHLY
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BRIEFED BEGIN AND THE CABINET BUT THAT BEGIN DID NOT TAKE
HIS WARNINGS SERIOUSLY.)

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 815
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS (TREAT AS NODIS)

5. WEIZMAN TALKED AT LENGTH OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH
GAMASY AND THE OTHER MILITARY MEMBERS OF GAMASY'S TEAM,
AS WELL AS OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH SADAT AND MUBARAK.
HE IS CONVINCED THAT HE ESTABLISHED A GOOD PROFESSIONAL
RAPPORT IN ALL OF THESE MEETINGS. HE RECOUNTED

A NUMBER OF EXCHANGES ABOUT THE 67 AND 73 WARS WHICH SUBSTANTIATE THIS ASSUMPTION. BUT HE SEEMED TOTALLY UNAWARE OF HOW HIS COMMENTS TO GAMASY ABOUT HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES HAD AFFECTED HIS LISTENERS. WE TOLD HIM THAT GAMASY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED NOT TO HAVE BEEN TOLD ABOUT WEIZMAN'S PLANS TO GO TO WASHINGTON TO OBTAIN APPROVAL OF F-16'S; CURIOUSLY, IT SEEMED TO SLIDE RIGHT OFF HIS BACK AND HE RECOUNTED THE CONVERSATION AGAIN AS THOUGH IT WAS AN EXAMPLE OF POSITIVE CAMARADERIE.

6. WEIZMAN IS DESPARATELY ANXIOUS TO GET THE MILITARY COMMITTEE BACK INTO ACTION. BUT HE IS SINCERELY BAFFLED WHAT TO DO IN THE COMMITTEE IF THE SETTLEMENTS QUESTION REMAINS FROZEN. I ASKED HIM WHETHER IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO SAY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT MEETING, WHEN AND IF IT TAKES PLACE, THAT HE PROPOSES THEY SET
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THE ISSUE ASIDE COMPLETELY FOR THE TIME BEING AND CONCENTRATE ON THE PURELY MILITARY QUESTIONS OF DEMILITARIZED ZONES, BUFFER ZONES, ROLES FOR UN FORCES, EARLY WARNING, AND SO FORTH. WEIZMAN SAID HE THOUGHT INDEED THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE. TEHILA DEMURRED, SAYING HE WAS NOT SO SURE. TEHILA POINTED OUT THAT IN PREVIOUS MILITARY COMMITTEE MEETINGS THEY HAD BEEN UNABLE TO TALK FOR MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES WITHOUT THE EGYPTIANS MENTIONING THE SETTLEMENTS QUESTION. ATHERTON SAID THAT PERHAPS WE COULD SUGGEST TO SADAT SUCH A "(65-\$ 58)" ON ANY DISCUSSION OF SETTLEMENTS AND THIS MIGHT HELP.

7. WEIZMAN IS WELL AWARE THAT HE HAS BEEN SINGLED OUT PUBLICLY BY SADAT AS A FAVORABLE FIGURE WITH WHOM TO DEAL, AND HE IS EQUALLY AWARE THAT HE WORKS FOR A PRIME MINISTER WHO IS MORE THAN USUALLY SUSPICIOUS ABOUT ANY SIGNS OF DISLOYALTY AMONG HIS SUBORDINATES. HAVING EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST WITH BEGIN SOME ROUGH WATERS OVER QUESTIONS OF HIS POLITICAL LOYALTY, WEIZMAN IS CERTAINLY HYPERSENSITIVE TO THE DANGEROUS SPOT HE IS CURRENTLY IN POLITICALLY, AND DISTURBED BY WHAT HE READS AS A DELIBERATE EFFORT BY SADAT TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN HIM AND BEGIN. HE IS NOT GOING TO ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE CAUGHT IN SUCH A CORNER. FOR THIS REASON HE CANNOT, AS MUCH AS HE WOULD LIKE TO, CONSIDER TAKING HIS WIFE TO EGYPT ON A PRIVATE VISIT. HE CAN RETURN ONLY WHEN THE MILITARY COMMITTEE RECONVENES. MOREOVER, HE SAID HE COULD NOT "LIFT A FINGER" TO HURRY THE DECISION BY BEGIN AND THE CABINET. FOR HIM TO TAKE THE LEAD AT THIS POINT WILL ONLY FEED BEGIN'S SUSPICIONS AND ADD TO THE STORIES ALREADY CIRCULATING IN THE JERUSALEM POLITICAL WORLD

THAT HE IS SADAT'S FAIR-HAIRED BOY.

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8. NONETHELESS, WEIZMAN IS FUNDAMENTALLY OPTIMISTIC THAT HE WILL GET AUTHORIZATION SOON TO RETURN TO CAIRO, IF NO MORE RHETORICAL AND PRESS SALVOS BETWEEN THE CAPITALS OCCUR IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. HE IS DETERMINED TO KEEP GENERAL TAMIR IN PLACE AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE AVAILABLE FOR IMMEDIATE RECONVENING. AND HE IS DESPARATELY ANXIOUS TO SALVAGE THE NEGOTIATIONS.

9. WEIZMAN TALKED A GOOD DEAL ABOUT THE SETTLEMENTS PROBLEM AND THE AIRFIELD PROBLEM. BUT HE IS CLEARLY TURNING OVER IN HIS MIND HOW BEGIN CAN BE BROUGHT TO GIVE UP THE SETTLEMENTS. HE IS PERSONALLY CONVINCED, I AM NOW CONFIDENT, THAT SADAT CANNOT BE MOVED ON THE SETTLEMENTS, BUT HE DOES NOT SEE NOW HOW BEGIN CAN BE MOVED EITHER. WE ALL AGREED THAT A MORATORIUM ON THE DEBATE AND THE NEGOTIATIONS OVER SETTLEMENTS IS HERPAS

THE ONLY PROMISING AVENUE. IF EITHER SADAT OR BEGIN IS TO BE BROUGHT TO MODIFY HIS POSITION, IT WOULD ONLY BE AFTER A COOLING OFF PERIOD AND AFTER THE FINAL SHAPE OF A SINAI SETTLEMENT BECAME CLEARLY EVIDENT TO BOTH MEN.

10. WEIZMAN TALKED A GOOD DEAL ABOUT TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE AS A SOLUTION. IN ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION, ATHERTON SAID HE PERSONALLY HAD BEEN CONVINCED SINCE 1967 THAT THE EGYPTIANS WOULD NEVE SETTLE FOR LESS THAN THE OLD INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY. NOTHING HE HAD HEARED RECENTLY HAD CHANGED HIM MIND.

11. THE CONVERSATION ENDED ON AN INCONCLUSIVE NOTE, WITH WEIZMAN SUGGESTING AGAIN THAT WE TRY TO GET SADAT TO SEND SOME KIND OF PRIVATE MESSAGE TO BEGIN WHICH WOULD ASSUAGE HIS WOUNDED FEELINGS. WE WERE NOT ENCOURAGING. LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PEACE, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV01097
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840137-2104, N780002-0061
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780127/aaaaawpl.tel
Line Count: 265
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a2d9a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 CAIRO 2457
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3720614
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WEIZMAN'S VIEWS ON NEXT STEPS IN PEACE PROCESS
TAGS: PGOV, MILI, PBOR, IS, EG, US, XF, (WEIZMAN, EZER)
To: STATE CAIRO MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a2d9a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014